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Kirkpatrick, A. A.

Speech ... Nov. 15th, 1904
... on the "Alleged...

Adelaide

1904

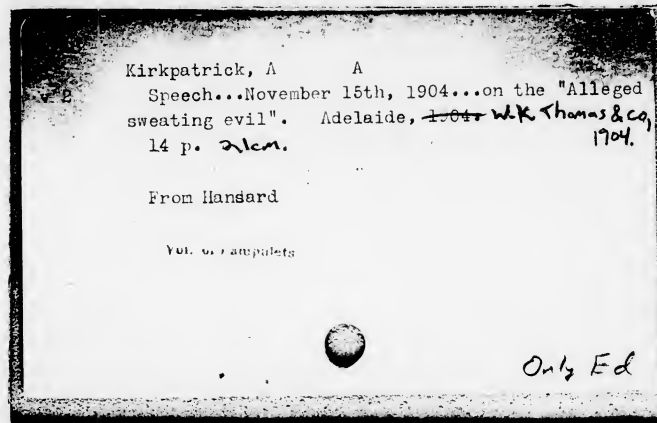
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SPEECH

BY THE

HON. A. A. KIRKPATRICK, M.L.C.,

ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH, 1904,

On the Motion for the adoption of the

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ON THE

“Alleged Sweating Evil.”

[REPRINTED FROM HANSARD.]

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—
1904.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE

ON THE

"ALLEGED SWEATING EVIL."

The above Committee consisted of the Hons. E. Lucas (Chairman), G. Brookman, A. A. Kirkpatrick, H. W. Thompson, and J. Vardon (Commissioner of Public Works).

In all, sixty-five witnesses, twelve of them being in Melbourne, were examined. The trades and occupations of the witnesses were as follows :—Baking (6), bootmaking (10), clothing (14), dressmaking (7), shirtmaking (7), tailoring (1), whiteworkers (3), furniture making (4), printing (1), tinsmithing (1), clergymen (2), contractor (1), secretaries (2), warehousemen (2), inspectors (4).

SWEATING IN ADELAIDE.

The Committee's report, signed by the Chairman, stated, regarding the evidence tendered in Adelaide, that sweating by a middleman, or sub-contractor, had disappeared, but "if sweating be taken to mean an unduly low rate of wage for the work performed, then we have to report that it exists to a considerable extent, particularly in regard to female labour in the manufacture of wearing apparel."

WAGES BOARDS IN MELBOURNE.

The Committee reported that the result of their inquiries into the effect of the operation of the wages boards in Melbourne showed :—

- (a) That wages have been considerably increased in the majority of trades.
- (b) That large numbers of operatives have been thrown out of employment.
- (c) That undue limitation of juvenile labour has resulted, and proved a great hardship.
- (d) That outworkers have largely decreased in numbers, and some have suffered considerably.
- (e) That a number of factories have been closed.
- (f) That the tendency in regard to wages is that the minimum becomes the maximum.
- (g) That taskwork has been introduced into factories, and consequently employees have to work harder.
- (h) That the law is evaded in a number of trades.

- (i) That in cabinetmaking the Chinese have profited at the expense of Europeans.
- (j) That strikes have been abolished.
- (k) That women operatives have benefited considerably.
- (l) That sweating in the general clothing trade has disappeared.
- (m) That the clothing is the only trade in which manufacturers and operatives appear, as a whole, satisfied with the board system.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The recommendations of the Committee were as follows:—

1. We recommend that two Wages Boards, applying only to women and young persons under 21 years of age, be created in connection with the following trades, viz.:—(a) Men's, youths', and boys' clothing, including shirtmaking; (b) under-clothing, dressmaking, millinery, and whitework.
2. That the boards so created, and their determinations, shall permanently lapse on December 31, 1906, unless their continuance be previously sanctioned by a resolution carried by both Houses of Parliament.
3. That all determinations of the aforesaid boards in regard to prices or rates of wages shall be governed by the principles of section 14 of the Victorian Factories and Shops Act, 1903.
4. That a Court of Industrial Appeal be constituted in accordance with the Victorian Factories and Shops Act.
5. That section 20 of the Factories Amendment Act, 1900, be amended, to provide for permits being granted to slow and unskilful workers.
6. That a system of indentured apprenticeship be encouraged in all the principal trades and manufactures.

E. LUCAS, Chairman.

I dissent from recommendation No. 1, as regards the limitation to women and young persons under 21 years of age.

JOS. VARDON.

I dissent from recommendation No. 1, as regards the limitation to women and young persons under 21 years of age, and from Nos. 2, 3, and 4.

A. A. KIRKPATRICK.

Select Committee on the "Alleged Sweating Evil."

(Reprinted from "Hansard.")

Adjourned debate on the motion of the Hon. E. Lucas—"That the report of the select committee on the alleged sweating evil be adopted."

The Hon. A. A. KIRKPATRICK said that when the motion for the appointment of the select committee was carried by the Council there was an understanding that it should not be any cause for delaying some action in reference to the regulations affecting the Wages Boards. Up to the present he had had no reason to complain, but he would point out that it was no use making a promise one way and breaking it, however unintentionally, another way. The Council must admit that delay would unquestionably result if they adopted the course recommended by a majority of one of the select committee—that before anything was done legislation should be passed through both Houses. If something were not done the blame and responsibility would rest on the Council. (Hon. G. Brookman—"We never agreed to establish the Wages Boards.") The idea was that the regulations would be dealt with this session. (Hon. J. J. Duncan—"Dealt with—yes.") What did the hon. member mean? The idea was that the regulations would be dealt with, and that some concession however small, would be made. (Hon. G. Brookman—"That was never promised.") He was very glad to hear that admission, because it cleared up a doubt in his mind. He did not care twopence for the alleged concession recommended in the report of the committee. It was a restriction, not a concession—it was taking away a privilege which the Parliament had given to the people. A law at present on the statute book said that these Wages Boards should apply to all the workers—men, women, and children. Mr. Lucas, however, wanted them to apply to only women and children. He asserted that if the Council proceeded in the way recommended by the committee they would deliberately and knowingly block anything being done during the life of this Parliament. (Hon. J. J. Duncan—"The responsibility rests on the Government.") Why should three out of five members of a select committee presume to say to the Government that they should in-

troduce a Bill against its own policy? No Government with any self-respect would do such a thing. (Hon. E. Lucas—"They do believe in it so far as it goes.") He wanted to say that if ever he had any more work on select committees to do in labour matters he would prefer to be associated with either Mr. Duncan or Mr. Warren before Mr. Lucas. He knew who he would get most from. (Hon. G. Brookman—"That is most unfair.") Mr. Brookman had not followed the matter up so closely as he had done. (Hon. G. Brookman—"I know as much about the question as you do.") He dared say that the hon. member knew more, but he had not taken the same interest in the work of the committee as he himself had done. Mr. Lucas called himself a Liberal, and Mr. Warren was proud to proclaim himself a Conservative, yet he was certain that on industrial matters he would get more from the latter class of politician than from one of the character of Mr. Lucas. He would prove that his recommendations—they were all Mr. Lucas's—were absolutely contrary to the elements contained in the report. Members of the Council were not going by any dodge to say that they were keeping their pledge in asking some one else to introduce a Bill. (Hon. E. Lucas—"No pledge was ever given.") Mr. Duncan more than once assured him that his party had no intention of putting the subject off, otherwise he would have fought the matter tooth and nail. Everybody must have thought that the result of the committee's work would be to have the regulations dealt with in some way or other. Certainly nobody, except perhaps Mr. Lucas, ever dreamt that an alteration of the law would be suggested. Such a thing was unknown in Australasia, Wages Boards or Arbitration Courts being in existence everywhere except in South Australia. (Hon. E. Lucas—"You forget that the Victorian royal commission recommended an alteration of the law.") His point was that the law now suggested here was not in existence anywhere in Australasia. He had a return to show the correctness of his statement. In Victoria they had Wages Boards; in New South Wales Arbitration Court; in Western Australia Arbitration Act; in New Zealand Industrial Conciliation and

Arbitration Act; and in South Australia a Factories Act not in operation. There were 3 boards in Victoria, yet it seemed that they were too timid to try one in South Australia. Mr. Lucas said he had drafted the report in accordance with his conscience and convictions, and based it on the evidence. It was certainly not based on the evidence. Where the hon. member seemed to have made his mistake was in depending too much on reports from the Victorian commission. He was going to rely for his case on the evidence, and 90 per cent. of that the evidence of employers. The evidence proved first of all that sweating existed in Adelaide. (Hon. E. Lucas—"It all depends what you call sweating.") But Mr. Lucas said to himself, (Hon. J. H. Howe—"He proves it conclusively.") Mr. Lucas also showed where the stopping of sweating would be a benefit to workers and employers alike. He wanted the matter to be dealt with fairly on its merits. (Hon. J. Duncan—"That is what we all want.") He was going to show that the evidence was overwhelming in favour of Wages Boards. They examined 12 witnesses in Melbourne. Five employers and two factory inspectors out of the dozen were in favour of boards, three employers said they were not, and two other witnesses (one the secretary of an organization) were partially in favour. The five employers in favour of Wages Boards employed 1,630 hands, against 140 employed by those in opposition to them, or, allowing the latter 250 for one of the partially favourable, 390. In Adelaide there were 12 employers in favour, 9 against, and 10 undecided. But the evidence was more convincing still when they took the whole of the witnesses. Thirty were in favour, 12 against, and 23 undecided, partially in favour, or "question not asked." So there was nearly a 3 to 1 majority in favour of Wages Boards. The first evidence to which he asked members' attention was that of Mr. B. Gostrey, manager for Lincoln, Stuart, & Co., the latter of whom was a member of the Legislative Council of Victoria. The firm employed 200 hands, and the witness attended with the sanction of his employer. He took extracts from his evidence:—"4908. Is your firm satisfied with the existing condition of things?—On the whole, yes. There are many little things that crop up and require adjustment, but in the end they find their level.

There is not an Act passed but which, when put into actual operation creates little difficulties which have to be overcome. Time remedies the defects. 4909. What has been the result of the operations of the Clothing Board as far as the manufacturers are concerned?—Do you mean whether the board has been beneficial or otherwise? 4910. Quite so?—It has had a tendency to alleviate the condition of the hands all round—morally and otherwise. The buildings in which they used to work prior to the Act were very inferior. We all recognise that the conditions under which they work now are distinctly better." Let them take Mr. A. Stewart, one of the largest printers in Melbourne:—"4908. Are the members of your firm satisfied with the operations of the board?—My partner and I are. We recognise that there are corners to be rubbed off in this as in other trades that are under boards. 4990. How about the employees? Has the average wage of a journeyman printer been increased by the introduction of a board?—It has had a tendency to improve the condition of the men all round." He would read some of the evidence tendered by Mr. Harkness, whom Mr. Lucas said was the best and fairest witness he had ever heard, and who represented 5,000 or 6,000 employees:—"5061. What is the feeling of the Chamber of Manufacturers to-day with respect to the Wages Board? Do they regard them as helpful to industries or otherwise?—The feeling is very mixed in certain trades. In the clothing trade, for instance, many manufacturers say they would rather have a board than be without one. 5107. Are you in favour of the system being applied to what is known as the whitework trade?—Yes. 5108. You think it would be a good thing to apply it to that trade?—Yes." That gentleman represented the Chamber of Manufacturers. Some of the evidence of Mr. R. S. Walpole, who was secretary of the Employers' Federation of Victoria, and represented 5,000 members, was:—"5233. What is the feeling of the clothing manufacturers of to-day with respect to the operation of the Wages Board? Are they fairly well satisfied with it?—Yes; they say things are modifying. They are fairly well satisfied with it, manufacturers being able to produce good articles and pay good wages without fear of sweating competition." Yet

Mr. Lucas said the case was not proved. He would also quote:—"5254. Does the same remark apply to the white workers?—I think so, from what I gather. If there were any justification at all for a Wages Board it was in the direction of this particular trade." Mr. R. A. Pryor's views were embodied in the following:—"5408. May we take it that the shirt factory owners and employees are alike satisfied with the operations of the Wages Board at present?—Yes. 5409. That is your firm conviction?—Yes. If you like to have the evidence of some of our workers you are welcome to it. The best tribute to the acceptance of the determination is that there has been no alteration since 1898." Mr. A. Whybrow, who was one of the largest boot manufacturers in Victoria, and engaged 630 hands, expressed himself thus:—"5468. By Chairman—May we take it that, as far as you are concerned as a large employer of labour in the boot trade, you are satisfied with the operations of the board?—Yes. 5459. Do you believe it has been beneficial to your employees?—I do. 5460. As well as to the factory proprietors?—Yes. 5461. By the Hon. A. A. Kirkpatrick—Who are the largest employers in the boot line in this State?—I think we are—Whybrow & Co., Abbotford." What better evidence did they want? Mrs. E. Eckersall, another large employer, was examined as follows:—"5750. Was not the competition among the manufacturers equally as keen before the introduction of a Wages Board as after it?—No; there were not so many in the business. This would have come about even if we had no Act, and there are poor people who would never have earned a living wage but for it. 5766. Are you personally satisfied with the Wages Board as applied to shirts and underclothing?—I think it is very fair. It is our own fault if there should arise any cause for an alteration of the Act whatever. 5767. Is the condition of the workers, more particularly girls and women, in the shirt and underclothing trade better than it was before the law came into operation?—Yes. Where an unscrupulous manufacturer was able to undercut his neighbour by taking lines at a cheap rate he took it out of the labour of the poor women who worked for him. The board has fixed a fair wage so as to ensure the poor creatures earning a decent living." He would not quote from the evidence of

many witnesses in South Australia, preferring to rely on the statements of those who had had experience with Wages Boards. Mr. H. Edwards (the manager of Dowle's factory) had also some idea of the Victorian trade, and the following questions and answers indicated his opinions:—"6777. Would the introduction of a Wages Board here make any difference to your paysheet?—Not one penny's worth difference. I believe in the principle adopted in Melbourne, and I would like to see it introduced here. 6778. Does Mr. Dowle know you are coming here as a witness to-day?—Yes. 6779. Have you his authority to speak as regards his views?—I do not know his views; I give you my own. 6780. Have you full authority in regard to the management and control of the factory?—Yes. 6781. Knowing the conditions which prevail in Melbourne with regard to your trade, and knowing also the determination of the Wages Board there, would you personally be in favour of the introduction of a board here?—Most decidedly I would. I would far sooner see it in operation here than the way things are now. 6782. Do you know that a large number of Victorian boots are imported here? I am well aware of that. 6783. If the board were introduced here, and if the scale of wages was raised, would that prejudicially effect the local boot manufacturers?—I do not think it would make any difference at all." He (Mr. Kirkpatrick) had contended that there were 20 witnesses in favour of Wages Boards, but Mr. Lucas had urged that there were only 13. He allowed the Chairman of the committee to have his own way, but he would now deal with what Mr. Lucas dubbed the "undecideds." Mr. F. A. Lake-man, of the firm of Marshall & Co., was examined as follows:—"3882. Now, as to a Wages Board. I am not going to ask you what would happen if you had to pay 12 per cent. more, because it does not follow you would have to pay more; it might be less. What I want to put is this—that if a Wages Board were established in connection with your business, and a minimum rate was fixed, below which no manufacturer could go, would you object to it?—No; I think that is fair to all parties. We are anxious to deal as fairly with everybody as we possibly can. We do not want to downtread anybody, but we do not want

to send the trade out of the State. 3983. By the Chairman—What would be the effect of the introduction of such a system?—As long as the rate fixed was not too high I am inclined to think it would be a very fair principle. 3985. You will see that the price people can afford to pay home workers will be regulated by the price paid in the factories?—Certainly. Mr. Kirkpatrick said to me would it be detrimental if we had a minimum rate of wage, and I said I thought it would be fair.” Mr. Lewis had asserted that the firm of Marshall & Co. was not in favour of Wages Boards. From a remark made in his presence on Thursday it was possible that Mr. Marshall was not. Mr. Lakeman, who was a member of the firm, had stated that he was personally in favour of boards. (Hon. E. Lucas—“I cannot find it.”) Then Mr. Lucas must search for it. Mr. A. C. C. Morely, one of Marshall & Co.’s managers, replied to questions as follows:—“6257. Would your firm object to a Wages Board being brought into existence to fix a minimum rate?—I have no objection. I believe in a fair wage being paid. 6258. As far as you are concerned you would not object?—No. 6259. And you do not think the firm would?—I do not think the firm would, so far as I know. It was Mr. Lakeman who sent me down here.” (Hon. E. Lucas—“He was an employee.”) Mr. Morely was one of the managers Mr. Lucas quoted when it suited him. Mr. F. T. Derham, who for six years was President of the Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers and for two years President of the Employers’ Federation in that State, declared in his evidence that he was in favour of a living wage, which he defined as meaning sufficient to find clothing and shelter with a margin for a rainy day. They had it in evidence that a man with four or five children was in receipt of only £1 7/6 a week, and he needed more protection than women receiving 12/ and 15/ a week. The minimum rate across the border was £2 5/ a week. (Hon. G. Brookman—“Why doesn’t he go over there?”) For financial reasons, Mr. Lucas had stated—“Taking an extreme case, the Stonecutters’ Board had fixed a rate of £4 4/4 for a week of 45 hours, and made it illegal that a man should be paid £4 4/ a week. That seemed to be the height of absurdity.” He called Mr. Lucas’s attention to a great

mistake he had made there. In reading that report one would think the stonecutters had a minimum of £4 4/4, but the determination published officially in the report of the Victorian Royal Commission showed a very different state of things. The determination said:—“Carvers, 1/44 to 1/101 per hour; 45 hours a week. Range of wages from £3 1/104 to £4 4/4.” That determination was made in March, 1901. (Hon. E. Lucas—“One class of carver that I quoted cannot be paid less than 1/104 an hour.”) Even that was a variation of the hon. member’s original statement when he simply referred to stonecutters. Not only was it possible to pay a carver less than £4 4/4, but there were other grades of stonecutters who received only from £2 2/ to £2 16/ a week. Mr. Lucas’s statement therefore was absolutely wrong, and unless he withdrew it in his place he would be doing the workers of this State a great injustice. An important question was whether the establishment of Wages Boards in Victoria had injured that State’s trade. On that point he was very pleased to see that the committee agreed it was not so. The report said that figures supplied by the Chief Inspector of Factories in Melbourne showed a decided increase both in factories and in the number of persons employed therein during the past six years. In case there remained any doubt on the subject he would quote question 4812 in Mr. Ord’s evidence:—“I speak of the whole system. Has it injured the trade of the State?—In my opinion it has not. My reason for saying that is that under the Wages Board system the number of persons employed in factories in Victoria has increased from 40,814 in 1896 to 57,787 in 1903.” He would quote some more evidence on the point whether trade had been injured:—“4843. Will you give the committee a comparison of the export of clothing from Victoria to South Australia in 1896 and 1902?—In 1896, £7,034 worth; and for nine months of 1902, £23,099 worth.” “4848. Can you tell us what proportion of the £23,000 worth exported into South Australia in 1902 was Victorian made?—The whole of it.” Besides that they had the evidence of Mrs. Ekersall, a large manufacturer, going further to show that no bad effects whatever had resulted to the trade of Victoria by the establishment of the boards. Mr. Lucas had brought up the follow-

ing in the report:—“The tendency in regard to wages is that the minimum becomes the maximum.” He could not understand how he could come to that conclusion in face of the evidence taken in Victoria. (Hon. E. Lucas—“The weight of evidence is in favour of that conclusion.”) Out of 12 witnesses examined in Melbourne seven said that the minimum did not become the maximum, two said that it did, and three were not asked the question. How, then, could Mr. Lucas claim that the weight of evidence was in favour of the assertion made in the report? Mr. Harkness, the gentleman of whom Mr. Lucas had such a high opinion, said that it did not, and the number of employees engaged by those who said that the minimum did not become the maximum was 1,630, while the only employer who said that it did had the large number of eight hands under the Wages Boards. He would quote Mr. Harrison Ord on the point:—“4775. To what extent had the operation of the board in the clothing trade increased the wages of the operatives?—In 1896, before the determination came into force, the average wage paid to every employee in the trade—that is, including boys and girls—was £1 a week. In 1903 it was £1 2/2, and that indicates an average increase of 2/2 to each employee. 4776. Or a fraction over 10 per cent.?—Yes. While on that point I would like to say to the committee that the average wage paid to the females of 21 years of age and over last year was £1 5/5; that is, the average wage paid was 2/5 above the minimum. I think the committee will realize that that is a most important matter.” That settled the question absolutely—that instead of the minimum becoming the maximum the average wages paid were 2/5 or about 12 per cent. above the minimum. Mr. Harkness, representative of the Chamber of Commerce, and he believed, the Employers’ Federation, said:—“5080. That does not apply to the boot trade?—No. The minimum wage in the boot trade is 45/ a week. That has been so for three years past. We pay 45/, 48/50/, 52/0, 55/, 60/, and in one or two cases more than that.” How came it in face of all this testimony that the report said the minimum became the maximum? (Hon. E. Lucas—“It simply says that is the tendency.”) The statement was absolutely incorrect. He asserted that in the very na-

ture of things it was absolutely impossible for the minimum to become the maximum. Men had different values, and that was why they got different wages. He would quote what Mr. Walpole said. The witness was the secretary of the Victorian Employers’ Federation, and he gave evidence as follows:—“5324. By the Hon. A. A. Kirkpatrick—How many members of your association are manufacturers?—I suppose those interested in manufacture directly, about 1,000, 5325. Can you tell this committee the name of any one person who, in his business or his factory, has made the minimum wage the maximum?—I could not tell you at the present moment, because I have not gone into the matter with them more than in general conversation. I could ascertain it. I have not asked any man directly upon the point. 5326. You cannot mention the name of one firm or person who has made the minimum wage the maximum?—I have not made it my business to ask about that, but I am satisfied I could find a large number of them. 5327. Will you be good enough to ascertain? I shall feel obliged if you will find out the name or names of manufacturers among the thousand members of your federation who have made the minimum wage the maximum?—I will ask for that information. 5328. By the Chairman—Do you expect to get the information?—All I can do is to ask for it.” That was a lovely witness. He made the assertion that the minimum became the maximum; that there were 1,000 manufacturers working under the Wages Boards; and he could not give a single instance where the thing was in vogue; and although he said he would ask for the information they had not received the information from him. Another finding of the hon. member in B was that large numbers of operatives had been thrown out of employment. What Mr. Lucas had in his mind was in regard to old, slow, and infirm. He could only say, while disagreeing with the statement, that a little while ago the Anti-sweating League of Victoria put an advertisement in the papers asking that one case should be proved where an operative was dismissed for being unable to earn the minimum wage and so was refused permission to take less. No case was forthcoming. It was easy to make the statement, and bring in such a conclusion as that, but it was terribly difficult to prove it. His own opinion was not worth a rap when he said

it was not true, but he would quote evidence. He would take the Inspector of Factories, and he also could give employers. The inspector gave evidence as follows:—“4759. You spoke of the minimum wage being fixed at 20/. Does that apply to males or females?—Females. 4760. Did that have the effect of compelling the factory owners to discharge those slow and incompetent hands who could not earn the minimum?—There may have been such cases, but ever since 1896 I have asked repeatedly for evidence of that in the press; I have taken every possible public means, both before royal commissions and in other ways, of eliciting that, and I have never discovered a case which, in my opinion, could be said to be due to the Factories Act.” Then he also stated:—“4881. Has the introduction of the board, in fixing the minimum wage to be paid in the dressmaking business, led to the dismissal of the slower hands who, in the opinion of the employer, cannot earn the minimum wage?—It did in about 50 cases out of 5,500, but those are at work again. 4882. How does the Wages Board work as far as the baking trade is concerned?—That is one of the trades wherein it is constantly stated the Act is evaded. I have no evidence, however, that it is greatly evaded. This trade is one that lends itself to that, because there are, as a rule, only one or two men employed in the bakery.” Mr. Whybrow, the biggest boot manufacturer in Melbourne, said:—“5540. Did the application of the board in your factory affect the old, slow, and infirm workers?—No. 5441. Not any of them?—I would not like to say that. We found that the men, almost without exception, when they were given a chance, adapted themselves to the weekly wage conditions which the Act brought in. Prior to the passing of the Act many of the factories were working on piecework. 5442. How are they working to-day?—On weekly wages. We saw in a general way that the men did a certain quantity of work in the week. I found that, almost without exception, the men were up to the work. 5443. According to your statement, the application of the Act did not affect the slow workers?—Did the proprietors of the factories prepare for the application of the Act by getting rid of the slow men before it came into operation?—We did not. 5444. Your hands are paid by the week?—Yes.”

He could give other references to substantiate his contention. Numbers might have been affected, but there was not a case that was not met afterwards by the permit system, and the same with the outworkers. The hon. member said:—“The outworkers received far better prices than they did before the inauguration of the system, but the creation of boards threw a large number out of employment, and, generally speaking, they had been anything but a blessing.” If he had said that universally speaking they had been a blessing that would have been more in accordance with the evidence, and that could be proved by any number of quotations. Miss Cuthbertson said:—“5573. By the Chairman—Can you say with any degree of accuracy what percentage of increases the outworkers under the Clothing Board have received?—Have dealt with that in one of the reports. 5579. Can you give it to us approximately?—Take one case. A woman used to earn 11/ a week; it went up to 14/6. That was generally what happened. 5580. That would be a matter of 25 to 27 1/2 per cent?—Quite 20 per cent. 5581. It may be over 20 per cent?—Yes. 5582. Shall we say not less than 20 per cent?—I should not say less. 5583. I am speaking of the trade as a whole?—There would be about 20 per cent. increase. 5584. Has the determination of the board in the clothing trade been more beneficial to the women and the juvenile workers than to the male employees?—Yes.” In view of that it was hard to have it put before the public that while wages had gone up Wages Boards had been anything but a blessing. That was putting the cart before the horse. Another finding in regard to apprentices was:—“It has been persistently alleged that dressmakers and others in Adelaide take on batches of young girls, keep them for a year without payment of any kind, make no attempt to teach them the trade, and then dismiss them and take on a fresh lot. We enquired carefully into this matter, but failed to find any evidence verifying the statement.” The reply to that was that they had not a single employee in dressmaking before them to give evidence in Melbourne or in Victoria, and they failed to find it out because they had not the evidence. When the employees did not give evidence it was fair to say that the committee failed to find it out? It was assumed it did not exist, but they found it did exist in Victoria before the boards. Miss Cuthbertson told them that it was quite the common thing for a dressmaker to take girls on for a year, pay them nothing, keep them for six months or a year, and then discharge them and take on others. (Hon. G. Brookman—“What does Miss Thompson say?”) He would take her word, but that did not prove it. Before the Act it was the usual practice in Victoria. There were 33 dressmaking establishments paying no wages to certain of their assistants, and there were 250 employees who received no wages, and were not even apprenticed, and could be sent away at any time. Subsection H stated “that the law is evaded in a number of trades.” That was only partially true. It was not evaded any more than any other law. He admitted that as far as the Chinese were concerned it was impossible to make them carry out the law, but the Victorian Government had introduced a Bill which it was hoped would have the effect of making them more nearly conform with the law their competitors had to obey. (Hon. E. Lucas—“It will crush them out of the business.”) If they had a class that would not obey a law other people had to obey the sooner they were crushed out the better. They had the evidence of Messrs. Ord, Gostrey, Harkness, Walpole, Pryor, and Whybrow, who admitted that while the law might be evaded it was not evaded to any great extent except so far as the Chinese were concerned. It was hard to understand why it was evaded when they looked at the penalties. Question 4820 showed what they were:—“First offence, not more than £10; second offence, not less than £5 and not more than £25; third or any subsequent offence, not less than £50 and not more than £100. The registration of the factory or workroom of a person convicted of the third offence can be cancelled by the chief inspector.” With penalties like that he did not think the law would be persistently evaded, because the risk was altogether too great. A question which had been considered a good deal in connection with the matter was that of Chinese competition in the cabinetmaking trade. In the discussion last session it had been stated that Tye and Co. had to close down in consequence of the operations of the Wages Board. When the committee was in Melbourne, however, the Chairman did his utmost without suc-

cess to get a representative of the firm to give evidence on the point. (Hon. E. Lucas—“They did not care to be mixed up in it any more.”) He admitted freely that Chinese competition had been bad and the Chinamen evaded the Act; but he did not admit that the trade of Victoria, even the furniture trade, had declined, because the figures given to them disproved it. In 1896, a year before the Wages Boards were in existence, there were 584 European males engaged in the furniture trade, while in 1903 there were no fewer than 1,033. But the increase in the number of Chinamen engaged in the cabinetmaking trade was not nearly so large. In 1896 there were 444, and in 1903 590. Before they could further deal with the matter he supposed they ought to settle the question as to whether sweating existed in Adelaide. The report said it did, and he said it did. He had a quotation from a leading article in the Register:—“The committee appears to be somewhat inconsistent in suggesting that low payment in the clothing trade is due to keen competition among manufacturers, and at the same time recording that in no case could we find evidence of wages having been reduced in consequence of a manufacturer accepting a price below normal for making up goods, and employers affirmed that they had never done so.” Of course that wanted an explanation. That sweating did exist in Adelaide was proved by evidence given by a lady witness:—“3761. What does your best hand get per week?—My daughter is the best. 3762. We do not want to know what you pay her—that is a family matter. What do you pay the others?—One 8/, and one 9/. 3763. What age would those girls be?—About 20, or under. 3764. How long has the one receiving 9/ been with you?—A little over four years. She came to me as an apprentice. 3778. Is the girl who receives 9/ a fairly smart hand? Yes. We call her our blouse hand. She does most of the blouses.” The report said that no “white slavery” existed, but it depended on what they called white slavery. They had the evidence of Mr. W. P. Jackson, secretary of the Operative Bootmakers’ Union, who said he was working alongside a married man who received only 27/6 a week. Another part of the report said they had not found any evidence of the existence of sweating among the workers in the furniture trade. He did all he could to get

workmen to give evidence, but they appeared to be frightened. The committee received the following letter from the secretary of the Tailors and Pressers' Society:—"I have the honour by direction of my society to inform you that at the last meeting the question of giving evidence before your committee was considered, with the result that the following resolution was carried unanimously:—*"That the select committee on sweating be informed that although we know that sweating is carried on in Adelaide in the tailoring trade, we as workers are not prepared to give evidence on the matter, because we would be boycotted by the employers if we did so."* Mrs. Culler was also afraid:—"3392. What is your occupation?—Whiteworker. I do not want my name to be published. If the people I worked for knew I reported upon them I would get no more work. 3393. Which are you most anxious about—that your name should not be published, or that you should not be asked to disclose the names of the people for whom you are working?—I do not want my name to go in the paper. 3394. Have you any objection to tell us the names of the people for whom you work?—If they knew I reported on them I would not get any more work. 3395. Do you prefer not to give evidence lest you might lose your work?—I prefer not to give evidence." She was allowed to go. The following was from Mrs. Rogers' evidence:—"3415. For whom do you work—the retail shops or the ware-houses?—Will it do me an injury to tell you? 3416. I do not think so?—My husband has not been able to do any work for 10 years, and I have him to keep. I gave evidence before the royal commission on sweating, and after that I did not get any more work from three places. 3419. Did you attend before the royal commission as a witness?—Yes. There were three places from which I did not receive any more work after I gave evidence. They did not make any complaint to me; they just let me finish what I was at and then gave me nothing more to do. They considered I did wrong. 3420. Did they give you any explanation?—None whatever. They said I went against them." He thought that was conclusive about people being afraid to give evidence. He had tried over and over again to get witnesses. Mr. W. P. Jackson said:—"The only state-

ment I would like to make is in regard to not being able to give evidence. We could not get men to come forward. They were afraid. They said, 'I have my bread and butter to look after.' They cannot be blamed. Eighteen months ago, over this same question—the Wages Board regulations—I with several more attended a deputation to Mr. Jenkins to try and urge upon him the desirableness of bringing the regulations into force, and in the course of my remarks I said it was unfortunate for the other trades that the bootmakers were mixed up on the Wages Board clause of the Act, because it was simply through the action of the boot manufacturers that the wages regulations were thrown out. I also stated that the number of boys working in the factories was something deplorable, and also that men similar to myself, with a few grey hairs, were starting to dye their hair because they were afraid of being seen in the factories with grey hair. I got leave from the foreman to go to the deputation. I told him what I was going to do. It was on a Thursday. I went back to my work on the Thursday afternoon. I went to work on the Friday, and on the Saturday, at paytime, the foreman came to me and said, 'Jackson, you have to take your tools away.' I said, 'What is that for?' He said, 'It is over that deputation. I do not know what you said. I have not read it in the paper, but word has come from the office that I have to discharge you.' Do you think men are going to give evidence before a select committee and jeopardize their positions in that way? What I have said is as true as I am sitting here." For years that man had had a precarious living. Why did Jackson give the evidence? The chances were that the society said to him, "We will stand by you, Jackson, whatever may happen." The committee had stated that the effect of the operation of Wages Boards showed that undue limitation of juvenile labour had resulted, and had proved a great hardship. The present position was different, and Mr. Lucas had withheld half the statement. An employer could engage as many juveniles as he chose so long as they were apprenticed. Wages Boards had abolished strikes, South Australia seemed content to settle disputes by the barbarous methods of strikes, which did injury to all. The committee, by a majority of one, decided that men should not come under the operation of Wages Boards,

and that they should have their only remedy in strikes. The committee had stated that the enquiries elicited the fact that woman operatives had benefited considerably by Wages Boards. The wages to women in Victoria had increased 5/ a week, and they were also informed that the men were better off, and that the minimum was not the maximum.

At 6.30 p.m., the Council suspended its sitting for an hour. On resuming at 7.30 p.m.,

The Hon. A. A. KIRKPATRICK said the committee contended that sweating in the general clothing trade had disappeared. That was absolutely correct, and Wages Boards were responsible. The report, however, did not go far enough. They dealt with all trades, and not only the clothing trade. They might have added "and in most other trades." (Hon. E. Lucas:—"There is not a particle of evidence on that.") Questions 4816 and 4817, from the evidence of Mr. Ord, stated:—"Was there any considerable amount of what I would call and what you understand to be sweating from 1886 to 1896 in Victoria?—In my opinion there was, and commissions that investigated the matter found that it existed. Is it less since 1896 than previously?—In my opinion it is stopped in those trades which have boards to govern them." (Hon. E. Lucas:—"We have to decide on the weight of evidence.") He had given plenty of weight during his speech. Paragraph M stated:—"That the clothing is the only trade in which manufacturers and operatives appear, as a whole, to be satisfied with the board system." That was rather a strange way of reasoning, considering that the enquiries were confined to only six out of 38 boards. (Hon. E. Lucas:—"Our Act applies only to four.") That did not matter. The idea was to show that the effect of Wages Boards in Victoria, and at least 30 out of 38 trades did not have a single representative as a witness. (Hon. E. Lucas:—"We had a lot of evidence about them, though.") Surely they would not trust implicitly to hearsay evidence? (Hon. J. G. Bice:—"Who was responsible for the evidence?") He did not blame the Chairman, because they experienced great difficulty in getting witnesses. (Hon. E. Lucas:—"What about the representative of the Trades and Labour Council who did

not keep his engagement?"). That was very bad of him. (Hon. J. G. Bice:—"Were you not recommended by some South Australian body?") The Chamber of Manufacturers in South Australia communicated with the Victorian body. He reiterated that they had not a word of evidence in connection with 30 out of 38 Wages Boards. (Hon. E. Lucas:—"We say, 'appear to be satisfied.'" The assumption was that all the others did not agree. (Hon. E. Lucas:—"We do not say so.")

The PRESIDENT—It is difficult sometimes to find out who is speaking. I must ask hon. members to allow speakers to proceed without interruption.

The Hon. A. A. KIRKPATRICK said in the circumstances the assumption he had made was a fair one. Another finding of the committee had something to do with task work. It said:—"That task work has been introduced in factories, and consequently employees have to work harder." The Chairman asked Mr. Whybrow in reference to this matter, and nothing could be clearer than his answer:—"5448. We understand it to mean that where a number of men are working together on the bench a smart expert man sets the lead and turns out a given quantity of work per day?—A pacemaker, as it were. 5449. Yes?—Well there is nothing of that sort in our factory. There may be exceptions in the trade, but I doubt it. We have to combat that argument against the weekly wage system all the time. Now I think you will hear very little of it from the men. I heard our own factory referred to as Siberia." The witness thus absolutely denied that the boards led to task work in the factories, and being an employer members should not hesitate to accept his evidence. The Council might have noticed that not a fiftieth part of his quotations came from the evidence of employees. He had chosen to quote what the employers had said, and it was something in favour of the side he took when he was able to rely confidently on their evidence. When it was known that 30 trades were working satisfactorily in Victoria to-day with no great outcry against the Wages Boards, members ought to pause before deciding to absolutely block this question for the present session. If employers had been suffering from the ef-

fects of the boards they might have been expected to rush to the select committee in droves to relate their grievances, but they could scarcely get employers to appear before them. The evidence of a character damaging to the boards was very slight, because the testimony of one man who employed 50 hands could not be taken as answering for 30 odd boards. It was singular that out of 65 witnesses examined 32 were connected with the clothing trade. (Hon. E. Lucas—"Why?") Because the clothing trade people were more pleased with the boards than the others, and wanted to let the committee know it. The others could not have been very much concerned. However, despite the differences of opinion he trusted the session would not be allowed to close without something being done to grant relief to the workers. He did not ask that the four trades that the Act said should have boards should be dealt with at once. He only asked the Council to try the experiment so far as one trade was concerned, but that all the workers, and not merely the women and children in that trade, should be consider-

ed. If after the end of a year or two there was an outcry against the system the Council would still have the power to revoke the regulations.

The recommendations were put seriatim. No. 1.

The Hon. A. A. KIRKPATRICK moved to strike out the words "applying only to women and young persons under 21 years of age." The question was put that the words proposed to be struck out stand. This was declared carried. The COMMISSIONER of PUBLIC WORKS called for a division, which resulted as follows:—

Ayes, 11.—The Hons. G. Brookman, J. J. Duncan, J. Lewis, B. A. Moulton, H. C. E. Muecke, G. Riddoch, H. W. Thompson, A. von Doussa, L. von Doussa, J. Warren, and E. Lucas (teller).

Noes, 4.—The Hons. A. R. Addison, J. G. Bice, J. Vardon, and A. A. Kirkpatrick (teller).

Majority of 7 for the Ayes.

Recommendation agreed to. Recommendations 2 and 6 inclusive agreed to; report adopted.

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TITLE